

The Meander

Winter

February 2007

State of the Watershed Report Initiated

One of the main projects the Milk River Watershed Council Canada (MRWCC) will undertake in 2007 is a State of the Watershed Report.

This report will bring together technical experts to compile information that will tell us what we know about the health of the Milk River watershed.

We will examine water quality, riparian health, wildlife, land use and water supply, among other watershed components.

The State of the Watershed Report will also identify research and knowledge gaps.

This Report will be an important tool that will help us set direction and assist

the MRWCC, its members and partners begin watershed-scale planning and management.

We would like your input throughout the development of the State of the Watershed Report. If you have any ideas or suggestions, please forward them to Sandi (contact information on page 4).

We will be hosting a Community Open House to review the draft Table of Contents and to receive input on February 22, 2006 at the Milk River Civic Centre from 6:30 pm to 9:00 pm.

At this Open House, members of our State of the Watershed Report Team will provide an overview of

their respective programs and highlight the key indicators that they will use to determine the health of the Milk River watershed.

Join Us on

February 22, 2007

at the

Milk River Civic Centre

6:30 to 9:00 pm

to discuss the

State of the

Milk River Watershed



Inside this issue:

Milk River Clean Up Day 2

Team Updates 2

Focused on Partnerships 2

2006 Water Monitoring 3

New Faces and Places 3

Get to Know Your Rivers 4

Calendar of Events 4

Milk River Watershed Council Canada 2nd Annual General Meeting

The Milk River Watershed Council Canada's 2nd Annual General Meeting will be held on April 4, 2007 in the Milk River Civic Centre from 4 pm to 8:30 pm.

Learn more about the Milk River Watershed Council Canada and hear from two keynote speakers. Dinner will be provided.

We will be holding elections for Board of Director positions. The nominating committee will be announcing the vacancies in early February.

We encourage you to sign up for membership in order that you may vote for the Board of Directors. You can become a member and register for the AGM online! Visit our new website at www.milkriverwatershedcouncil.ca.

Milk River Clean Up Day



The First Annual Milk River Clean Up Day was a success!

It was not your ordinary River Clean Up. We found some amazing things. The most interesting was a roll of sheep wire that was wrapped so tightly around a willow shrub that no deer could browse it. It was the largest shrub in the area!

Other interesting articles included old tires, five

gallon pails, stoves, barbed-wire and more tires!

We were happy that Brad Downey from the Alberta Conservation Association was there to help us out. Brad pointed out a snake hibernacula in the area. There were quite a few snake skins on the rocks.

Everyone enjoyed a barbecue lunch and the break that came with it. The wind nearly blew a

few volunteers over the edge but everyone survived the day.

We would like to thank the County of Warner for lending their winch truck to the project and also the Alberta Stewardship Network for the funding they provided to the Milk River Ranchers.

Make sure you join us next year for a great day helping improve the health of the river!

Visit the
MRWCC's new
website at
www.milkriverwatershedcouncil.ca
and see what's new!

Team Updates—Research and Monitoring Team

The Research and Monitoring Team is developing an erosion research project that will identify the extent of erosion along the Milk River and predict future erosion trends in relationship to potential increased flows from the St. Mary diversion.

The process of erosion in the Milk River has negative impacts on water sup-

ply and water quality.

Impacts include:

- Siltation in dugouts and reservoirs,
- Wells, pump sites and irrigation infrastructure located in the floodplain may be at risk due to erosion,
- Irrigation equipment has a limited lifespan

due to abrasive sediments wearing out seals and brass piping,

- Sediments clog intakes and pipe resulting in a higher degree of "down" time for Milk River water users.

Watch for more detail as this project gets started!



Keston Prince,
County of Warner

Focused on Partnerships

The MRWCC would not be very successful without our Partners!

Keston Prince is the Rural Conservation Technician for the County of Warner.

He has been working with the Alberta Environmentally Sustainable Agricultural Program (AESAP) and the County of Warner Ag

Service Board for about 3 years.

Keston works one-on-one with producers as well as hosts workshops and implements demonstration projects to transfer information about best management practices to farmers and ranchers in the County. He also helps the Milk River Ranchers

with the management of their program.

The three main areas of focus in the County are Range and Riparian Management, Integrated Pest Management and Manure Management.

Feel free to contact Keston at Ph. 403-642-2255.

2006 Water Quality Monitoring Program

A water quality monitoring program was initiated in 2006 in partnership with the MRWCC, Alberta Environment, Cardston County, the County of Warner and the County of Forty Mile.

Bi-weekly water samples were collected from the headwaters of the Milk River (the entry point of the North and South forks into Canada) and from 8 other locations down-

stream to the western border crossing. Miner's Coulee was sampled once before it stopped flowing and Verdigris Coulee was dry all summer long.

Water samples were analyzed for fecal coliform and *E.coli* bacteria, nutrients, salts and sediment.

The results of the monitoring are being summarized in a brief report that will be available at the

Annual General Meeting on April 4, 2007.

We hope to continue the water quality monitoring in 2007 as part of a long-term program.

We would like to thank Wendell Koning, Ray Walker (AENV), Tim Romanow (Cardston County), Keston Prince (County of Warner), Warren Burgevitz (County of Forty Mile), Mark Willms and Paul Avery at Writing

-on-Stone Provincial Park for their assistance in the successful sampling year!



Ray Walker (AENV) joins us on "Training Day".

New Faces and Places at Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park

We would like to welcome Robi Gareau to the Milk River Watershed Council Canada and as the new Conservation Officer at Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park.

Robi has a long history with Parks, starting when he was 18, working summers while earning a BSc in Biology/Physical Geography at the University of Alberta. Robi has 10 years Parks experience, gained in Waterton Lakes, Jasper and Elk Island National Park. Robi was also a Park Warden in Banff National Park.

Robi met his wife Juli in Banff where she was a contract wildlife biologist at the time. Robi, Juli and their daughter Fiona, recently moved to the Park and look forward to their new life and job. Robi says he is thrilled by the opportunity, as this is the career he has always wanted and loved. He and his family are very passionate about conservation issues and initiatives.

Watch for the Grand Opening celebration of the new Visitor Centre. It is tentatively being planned for the weekend of June 21, to coincide with National Aboriginal Day. The new facility, an Alberta Centennial Project, was designed with consultation and input from the local community, including members of the Blackfoot Confederacy. A year round Visitor Centre coordinator will be joining the Writing-on-Stone Team by late January. The building will feature extensive interpretive displays, an information desk and gift shop, and a GREAT view of the Milk River and Sweetgrass Hills!



Robi with wife Juli and daughter Fiona.

"The Writing-on-Stone job is a perfect fit for me and my family, and we love it here."

***- Robi Gareau,
Conservation Officer***

New Visitor Centre at Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park





Box 313
Milk River, AB
T0K 1M0

Our Water ~ Our Legacy

*"I was born upon
thy bank, river,
My blood flows in
thy stream,
And thou
meanderest forever
At the bottom of my
dream"*

*Henry David
Thoreau, Journals
(1906), 1842*

Water Supply Forecast 2007

Near average natural runoff volumes are forecast for the March to September 2007 period in the Milk River Watershed. Current forecasts in the watershed are 18 to 30% higher than volumes recorded during the March through September 2006 period. Future snowfall and summer rainfall, will translate into runoff as soil moisture conditions were average going into winter. For more information and monthly updates on water supply in the Milk River Watershed visit: www3.gov.ab.ca/env/water/WS/WaterSupply/jan2007/milkwsfsumm.html.

Get to Know Your Milk River this Summer!

The Milk River Watershed Council Canada would like to provide our members with an opportunity to experience the Milk River from a different perspective this summer. We will tour a reach of the Milk River in June and discuss unique features of the river and its tributaries. A number of Technical experts will join us on the trip to describe the ecology, water management and unique features of the Milk River system. Prepare for an amazing experience that will leave you wanting more time on the water!



Space will be limited to 35 people. A cost of \$ 35.00 per person may be collected for canoe rental, transportation and lunch. Register early with Sandi Riemersma, 403-684-3117 or email sandi@milkriverwatershedcouncil.ca.

Calendar of Events—Get Involved!

Milk River State of the Watershed Report

Community Open House

Milk River Civic Centre

February 22, 2007

6:30 to 9:00 pm

MRWCC 2nd AGM

Milk River Civic Centre

April 4, 2007

4:00 to 8:30 pm



Get to Know your Milk River!

June 2007—More information will follow.

Are you hosting an event that you would like advertised?

Why not send your event information to the Milk River Watershed Council Canada and we will help you spread the word. Send your events to the Contact below.

Contact Us

Sandi Riemersma,
MRWCC Project Coordinator
Ph. 403-684-3117 or Cell 403-921-5667
Email: sandi@milkriverwatershedcouncil.ca